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A New York Curator's 19th-Century Salon

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"Most of my stuff is slightly strange," says Gary Tinterow. "I like things that shine and glint and are interesting to look at." ABOVE: The oak-paneled living room of his apartment has landscapes by Nousveaux (left), and renderings of a Normandy château and a scene in the Vosges by anonymous French painters.

OPPOSITE: "I liked her severe regard," says Tinterow of the noblewoman's portrait over the mantel. A gilt and patinated bronze fire fender decorates the *faux*-stone fireplace.

Silk fabrics and soothing tones sound a gentle note in the master bedroom. At left is a 1906 photograph, *Young Man with Brown Hat*, by Heinrich Kühn. "I'm often asked if it's a portrait of me as a boy," notes Kassar. Atop the black-lacquered chest is an 18th-century Chinese scholar's brush pot.

cluttered. "You don't have to decorate something overnight," says Baugh. "The one thing you have to learn is not to put something in that empty corner until you find exactly what you like, because if you do, you'll wake up three years later and it will still be there."

Many of the details in the apartment are deliberately muted, to underscore pieces as varied as a pair of Louis XV gilt console tables and a fifteenth-century cast-iron Buddha from China. The walls are a soft putty, the windows have sheer, simple draperies, and the upholstered furniture is clean-lined and covered in a white cotton jacquard. In order to minimize the number of lamps, Baugh added discreet soffits that enclose spotlights around the perimeter of the rooms.

The mood is serene and orderly and it has affected the way Kassar uses the apartment. He loves to entertain, describing parties as "pleasurable hard work," but he says he's changing his style. "I started out planning big cocktail parties, but I've outgrown that kind of thing."

Although he's given sit-down dinners for as many as forty guests, his favorite party these days is dinner for eight. Kassar likes to put favorite art objects—perhaps pieces of his favorite green porcelain—in the spotlight at the center of the dining table, and guests often eat off elaborate antique plates, such as his Russian porcelain from the collection of Catherine the Great. "I don't put anything behind closed doors," he says. "The fun of having things is being able to use them. I'm not a collector for collecting's sake."

Summing up the pleasure he derives from his striking tower apartment, Kassar says, "Even sophisticated New Yorkers are bowled over by the view and by the low-key elegance. It's refined but not stuffy." In a city where grace under pressure can seem a distant goal, Kassar's discerning sensibility has made it look easy.□

"The living room is broken up into more intimate areas," says designer Alan Lindenfeld, "so that one person or twenty can feel comfortable." RIGHT: A Napoléon III-style armchair complements an American Empire *récamier* in the center of the room. BELOW: A painting of an angel extinguishing his torch at a tomb, circa 1790, by an unknown French artist, sits on a Danish Biedermeier secretary with assorted bibelots.

GARY TINTEROW, AN ASSOCIATE CURATOR at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, spends his days scrutinizing, preserving and writing about nineteenth-century European paintings. And when the day is done, he comes home to an apartment that evokes the mood and décor—fringed armchairs and gold-framed landscapes—of the last century, especially its second half as lived by the well-to-do in France and England.

While Tinterow's apartment is a bit of a time capsule, it's anything but stuffy. Set on the top floor of a 1920s building on one of the boulevards of Manhattan's Upper West Side, it was made for relaxing. The sizable, working *faux*-stone fireplace in the living room—"It's hard to get logs big enough for it," he complains—draws guests on a winter's night to settle in with brandies on the curvaceous mahogany *récamier* or the red silk armchairs. The far side of the clubby, dark-paneled room—Tinterow describes the paneling as "stockbroker Tudor"—is left open to accommodate the circulation of guests at any of the young curator's many parties. The bedroom is appropriately muted and shadowy, except for one insomniac touch: a large gilt-bronze clock topped by a figure of Alexander the Great studying a tablet.

At thirty-four years old, Tinterow hasn't had decades to piece together a stage set of an apartment. With luck and a connoisseur's eye, however, he has managed to assemble a collection of furniture and paintings that's at once personal, cohesive, quirky and instructive. It all started when Tinterow was a graduate student in art history at Harvard. On his way to classes, he had to walk past the antiques shops on Charles Street, where the possessions of wealthy Beacon Hill matrons would often turn up. "By looking in the windows regularly, you saw what was there fresh that morning," he remembers. "And the kinds of things you could pick up were nineteenth-century things."

At Harvard, Tinterow caught the eye of the art world by mounting a major exhibition of Picasso drawings. The collector Douglas Cooper was impressed enough to ask him to help with a show on Cubism at the Tate Gallery in 1983. (A memento of this period is Tinterow's terra-cotta cast of a Picasso linoblock carving, given to him by Cooper.) After the show, Tinterow went to New York to begin his job at the Metropolitan Museum, where he, as part of a team, recently completed work on a massive catalogue to accompany the Degas show opening in Paris this month and in New York in September.

Tinterow's work often takes him to Paris, and that capital's flea markets are part of the secret behind Tinterow's *haute-de-siècle* collection. On one wall he has hung two dreamy landscapes by the French painter Edouard-Auguste Nousveaux, and on an adjacent wall, an oil-on-paper sketch of the kind a landscape painter would work from in his studio. Tinterow acquired these works in the winter of 1986, when he was moving into his apartment. At the time, the exchange rate was ten francs to the dollar, and early-nineteenth-century paintings were undervalued. Tinterow combed the flea markets looking for such canvases. "I wouldn't have been able to buy half my pictures if it hadn't been for the lack of interest and the devalued franc," he admits. In the past year these once-unpopular paintings have become nearly unattainable.

Tinterow's designer was Alan Lindenfeld, yet Lindenfeld describes his role more as a "collaborator," since Tinterow had such definite ideas about the look he was striving for. "The nineteenth century is both Gary's professional period and his love," says Lindenfeld. "The colors and fabrics are all very sumptuous and extravagant. There's a lot going on. He likes that because the paintings he deals with are also rich and complex. That's where his color schemes come from. And his little groupings of furniture, if you notice, are really vignettes."

As a curator, Tinterow's decisions must be precise and consistent. His use of nineteenth-century touches in his apartment, however, can be much looser and freer. He likes to combine elements in a more comfortable way so that there is none of the starched-collar feeling of an official exhibition. For all of his expertise, Tinterow is refreshingly unpretentious on the home front. "What's nice about working in the museum is that you really do spend lots of time with wonderful things," he explains. "And you get the need to own them out of your system. You can come home and have nice things that interest you and catch your eye, but at the same time aren't nearly as costly as the things you work with every day. There's something especially comforting and reassuring and engaging about that."

Tinterow has an eye for trick furniture and anonymous, idiosyncratic paintings. The center table in the living room, with its heavy base and adapted French and English forms, epitomizes a "robust, and slightly off, American style," Tinterow says. He claims to like his "funny" Dan-

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ish mahogany secretary because "there's something kind of lumpy about it," and his American Empire *récamier* for its "wonderful attenuation." He snapped up an anonymous 1812-ish portrait of a lady for over his fireplace because she has no eyebrows or eyelashes, and the portrait of a gentleman over his bed because the subject is pictured with two different-colored eyes.

Tinterow especially enjoys looking out from his seventeenth-floor vantage point over the solidly residential Upper West Side and beyond to the pinnacles of the Empire State Building and the Metropolitan Tower.

"It's fun to have these leaded windows as a view onto Manhattan," he remarks. "It's kind of a dislocation."□

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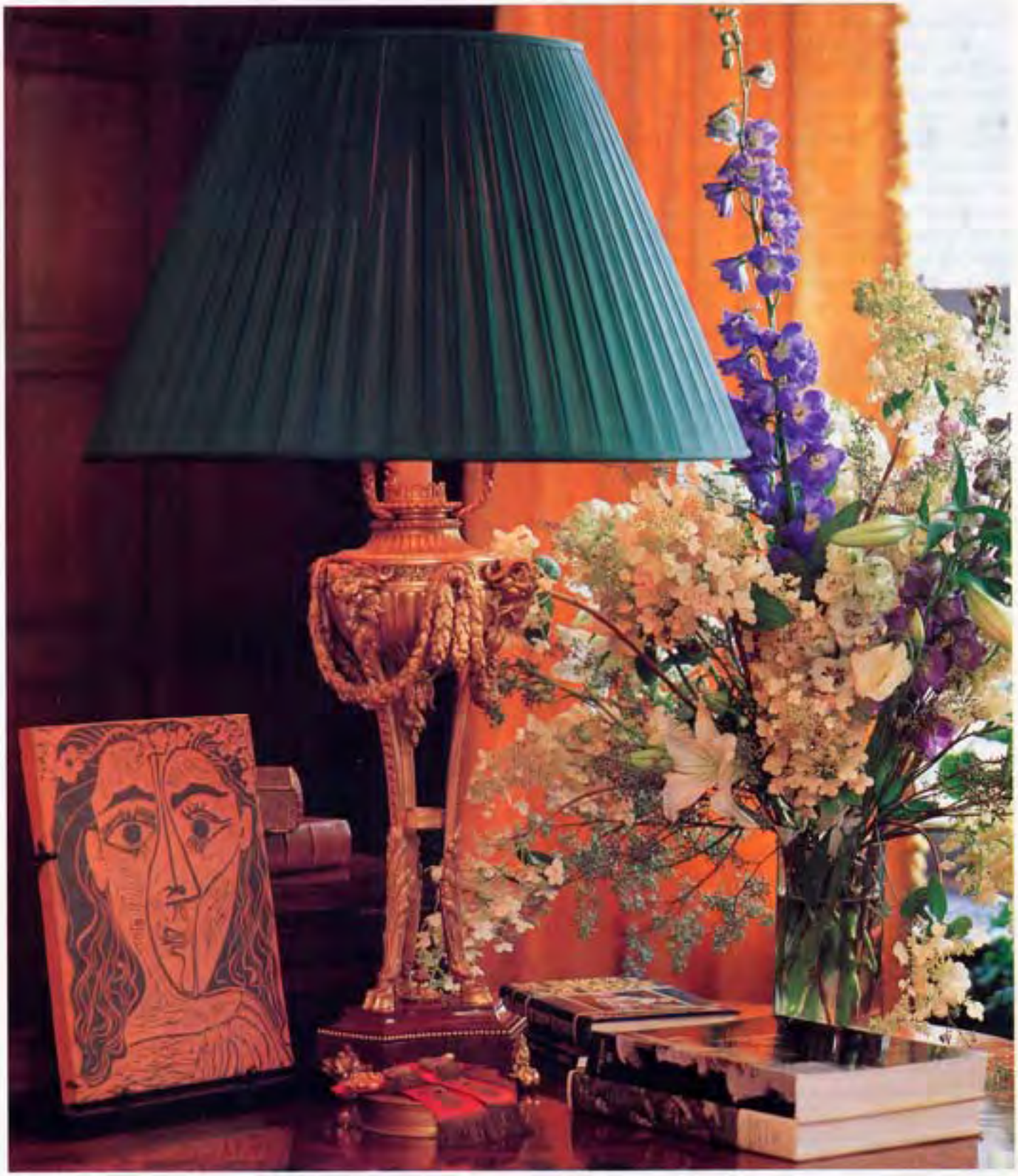

OPPOSITE: A terra-cotta cast of a Picasso linoblock—given to Tinterow by noted collector Douglas Cooper, with whom he curated a Cubism exhibit at the Tate Gallery in 1983—is displayed next to a 19th-century kerosene lamp. BELOW: "A lot of these clocks can be cloying, but this one is strong and Neoclassical," says Tinterow of the French gilt-bronze mantel clock, circa 1815, depicting the education of Alexander. On either side are English mahogany candlesticks.

For Their Eyes Only

From Paris to Los Angeles, these smart young curators are installing some of their best shows at home.

— JENNI LAU, with contributions by Katherine Bess, Blaise Simpson and James Reginato

PHOTO BY DAVID TURNER

Gary Tinterow

New York

As the Engelhard Associate Curator of the Metropolitan Museum, Gary Tinterow hangs around with names like Van Gogh and Poussin — the superstars of French painting. At home, it's another story. "Most of my own things are damaged and in poor condition," boasts Tinterow. "The whole thing is just to have fun, with comfortable objects that delight the eye.

"At the Met," he continues, "what I acquire has nothing to do with my own personal taste. We need strong, tough pictures — ones that offer you something visit after visit. My own taste is not so aggressive. I like curiousities." Above all, Tinterow prefers works from the Romantic period. "They tend to have a domestic scale and congeniality that I find attractive to live with. They're not so pompous and formal as things from the early 1900s, but they still reflect a confidence that began to dissolve later in the century."